

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. Apparatus for controlling a plurality of agent stations in a contact center, said apparatus comprising:

a switch, for running contact center applications software and for controlling agent stations and facilitating switching between agent stations and customers or other agent stations;

a Private Branch Exchange (PBX) for controlling agent stations and for facilitating switching between said agent stations and said customers or other agent stations;

control means for determining whether a particular agent station should be controlled by said PBX or said switch, and for allocating said control.

2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said control means is contained within said switch.

3. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said control means relies at least in part on a message sent from a particular agent in order to determine whether said particular agent should be controlled by either the PBX or the switch.

4. The apparatus of claim 3 wherein said control means maintains a table indicative of which of said agent stations are presently being controlled by said switch, and which are being controlled by said PBX.

5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said control means allocates control to said PBX for some duration and then allocates control to said switch for some duration.

6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said allocation is dynamic, said control being changed repeatedly from said PBX to said switch during operation.

7. Apparatus for implementing a contact center comprising:

a PBX, for switching contacts within said contact center;

a switch, said central processor comprising means for switching contacts within said contact center, and means for controlling whether said switch or said PBX is responsible for switching said contacts to and from any particular agent.

5 8. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said switch further comprises means for running software contact center applications, said applications being implemented in contacts controlled by said PBX as well as in contacts controlled by said switch.

10 9. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein said means for controlling comprises apparatus for temporarily changing a particular agent contacts from being controlled by said PBX to being controlled by said switch for the purpose of a single contact or portion thereof.

10 10. Apparatus of claim 8 wherein said means for controlling comprises apparatus for temporarily changing a particular agent contacts from being controlled by said switch to being controlled by said PBX for the purpose of a single call.

15 11. An agent station for use in a contact center, the agent station comprising:
 means for establishing contacts through a switching arrangement; and
 means for sending a message indicative of which of a plurality of switching
arrangements is to determine which contacts are routed to and from said agent station.

20 12. The agent station of claim 10 wherein said means for sending a message sends messages indicative that a different one of said switching arrangements should control said agent station.

13. A switch for use in a contact center comprising:
control means for instructing a PBX as to which of a plurality of agents said PBX

is responsible for controlling;

switching means for switching contacts to and from agents, the control of which is not done by the PBX.

14. The switch of claim 12 wherein said control means dynamically varies, during system operation, which agents are controlled by said switch, and which agents are controlled by said PBX.

15. A method of switching contacts through a contact center to an agent comprising: determining, for a particular agent, which of either a PBX or other switch should control the particular agent; and

after said determination, switching said contact through to said agent via either the PBX or the switch, as said determining step requires.

16. A method of controlling an agent station in a contact center, the method comprising the steps of:

logging on from the agent station and specifying, during said logon, which of a plurality of at least two switching means should control switching to and from said agent; and during operation of said center, controlling said agent station by a different one of said at least two switching means temporarily.

17. The method of claim 16 wherein one of said switching means is a contact center having software applications and another of said switching means is a PBX.

18. A call center switch comprising:
a processor for receiving a logon message from each of a plurality of agent terminals, and for parsing the logon message to ascertain a specified one of several possible

switching arrangements to interface said agent sending said logon message to a public network;
and

switching means for switching contacts to and from agents.

19. The call center switch of claim 18 further comprising a table within said switch for
5 maintaining a list of which agents are presently being controlled by each of said several switching
arrangements.

20. The call center switch of claim 19 connected to a Local Area Network (LAN), and
wherein said LAN is connected to a PBX.

21. A method of processing a contact in a contact center to facilitate the intervention of
10 an additional party, the method comprising the steps of:

facilitating a connection between an agent station and a remotely located terminal
over a public network, the agent station being controlled by a contact center switch connected to
a LAN;

signaling said contact center switch to add an additional entity to the contact;

15 sending a message from said contact center switch to a PBX over said LAN, said
message causing control of said entity to be added to change from said PBX to said contact center
switch, and

adding said entity to said contact.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein control of said added entity is returned to said
20 PBX during said contact.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein control of said agent is returned to said PBX after
said contact is completed.

24. A contact center switch comprising:

processing means for receiving logon messages from a plurality of agents, each agent capable of operating in a plurality of roles, the logon messages containing information indicative of which role in which the agent is operating; and

software for determining, based at least in part on the logon message, whether the switch or another device controls said each agent.

25. The contact center switch of claim 24 wherein said other device is a PBX.

26. Apparatus of claim 25 wherein said PBX and said contact center switch are connected to a network, said agents also being connected to said network, , and wherein a communications protocol is used to communicate between said contact center switch and said PBX over the network, and wherein said contact center switch and said agents communicate using the same communications protocol.

27. A method of determining which of a plurality of switching apparatus connected to agent stations in a contact center should control each of said agents, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a logon message from each of a plurality of agents, and

assigning control of said agent for the initiation and acceptance of contacts through one of a plurality of switching apparatus, said step of assigning being based at least in part upon said logon message.

28. The method of claim 17 wherein different agents are assigned to different switching apparatus.